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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

02 May 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Cell Signaling Clue to Cancer

26 April – BBC News reported a significant breakthrough in understanding the communication system within the body's cells could aid research into [cancer](#). Scientists have found that the chemical hydrogen peroxide - better known as a form of bleach - plays a central role in this communication process. It appears to be one of the ways to tell cells when they should divide and when they die. However, if the signaling system goes awry, then it may lead to cancer. There is increasing evidence that some cancers have abnormal levels of hydrogen peroxide. Usually it is toxic to cells and is broken down by an enzyme called peroxiredoxin. But researchers from Oregon State University and Wake Forest University in the US found the enzyme is only effective when levels of hydrogen peroxide are low. When levels of the chemical rise it appears to neutralize the enzyme that is then unable to break it down. [View Article](#)

Company Reports Progress on Mustard Gas Treatment

23 April – Reuters reported Quick-Med Technologies Inc. said that its investigational compound Ilomastat successfully prevented blistering in human skin samples exposed to [mustard gas](#) vapor. The company hopes to deliver a treatment for mustard gas exposure by 2004 for use in the event of a chemical attack. In the trial, which was conducted at an independent research facility in the Netherlands, the compound was effective in preventing the type of skin disintegration that leads to blistering, Quick-Med said. The compound was tested on skin samples donated after elective surgery. [View Article](#)

Cumulative Number of Reported Probable Cases of SARS From 1 Nov 2002¹ To 30 Apr 2003

Country	Cumulative # of case(s) ²	# of deaths	# recovered ³	Local chain(s) of transmission ⁴
Australia	4	0	3	None
Brazil	2	0	2	None
Bulgaria	1	0	0	None
Canada	148	20	87	Yes
China	3460	159	1332	Yes

China, Hong Kong	1589	157	791	Yes
China, Macao	1	0	0	None
China, Taiwan	78	1	25	Yes
France	5	0	1	None
Germany	7	0	7	None
Indonesia	2	0	1	None
Italy	9	0	4	None
Japan	2	0	0	None
Kuwait	1	0	1	None
Malaysia	6	2	3	None
Mongolia	6	0	3	None
Philippines	4	2	1	None
Republic of Ireland	1	0	1	None
Republic of Korea	1	0	0	None
Romania	1	0	1	None
Singapore	201	24	139	Yes
South Africa	1	0	0	None
Spain	1	0	1	None
Sweden	3	0	2	None
Switzerland	1	0	1	None
Thailand	7	2	5	None
United Kingdom	6	0	6	Yes
United States	52	0	not available	Yes
Viet Nam	63	5	53	None
Total	5663	372	2470	

Notes:

Cumulative number of cases includes number of deaths.

As SARS is a diagnosis of exclusion, the status of a reported case may change over time. This means that previously reported cases may be discarded after further investigation and follow-up.

1. The start of the period of surveillance has been changed to 1 November 2002 to capture cases of atypical pneumonia in China that are now recognized as being cases of SARS.
2. A decrease in the number of cumulative cases and discrepancies in the difference between cumulative number of cases of the last and the current WHO update are attributed to the discarding of cases.
3. Includes cases who are "discharged" or "recovered" as reported by the national public health authorities.
4. National public health authorities report to WHO on the areas in which local chain(s) of transmission is/are occurring. These areas are provided on the list of [Affected Areas](#).
5. One death attributed to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China occurred in a case medically transferred from Viet Nam.

Dimericine Reduces Suppression of Human Immune System Caused by Solar UV

28 April – Hoover News reported new research in humans shows that the drug Dimericine® reduces suppression of the immune system caused by [solar UV](#). This clinical study in humans, which confirms in humans what has been observed in animals exposed to UV and treated with Dimericine, will be presented at the International Investigative Dermatology meeting May 1-4. Dimericine (T4N5 Liposome Lotion) was developed by as a revolutionary approach to preventing skin cancer by repairing DNA damage. It delivers a purified DNA repair enzyme in liposomes topically to skin to reverse sun damage to DNA and thereby prevent [skin cancer](#). [View Article](#)

Early Breast Tests Could Save Lives

26 April – The Age reported researchers this week said they had uncovered powerful evidence that introducing routine screening for [breast cancer](#) for women aged 40 and over could save

many more lives each year. The professor who led the study said the best estimate, based on evidence from two areas in Sweden, was that there were 20 to 30 percent fewer deaths among women aged 40 to 49 when they were routinely screened for the disease. The head of cancer screening for the charity Cancer Research UK, Professor Stephen Duffy, said this was on top of a 15 to 20 per cent improvement in survival rates (even taking into account women who were not screened) due to better diagnosis and treatment in the past 45 years. Success rates for the under-50s seemed very similar to those for over-50s, according to the Swedish results. [View Article](#)

Genetic Mutation Ups Bacterial Infection Risk

28 April – Reuters reported a rare genetic variation appears to increase a person's susceptibility to infection and death from [bacterial meningitis](#). While many people carry meningococcal bacteria around in their nose or throat, as few as 1 in 100,000 goes on to develop serious infections. In the current investigation, Dr. Bruce Beutler and colleagues looked at a rare genetic mutation in a toll-like receptor 4 ([TLR4](#)), one of a group of 10 proteins that plays a role in the detection and response to infections. The TLR4 mutation was more common in youngsters with meningococcal disease, such as meningitis or blood infections, than in children or adults who did not develop the infection. The findings suggest that genetic analysis may identify people with DNA mutations that may make them more susceptible to infections with meningococcal disease and perhaps other types of related bacteria. Toll-like receptors are present on the surface of immune cells, heart muscle cells, and cells that line blood vessels. When TLRs recognize a substance on the surface of bacteria, they signal the immune system to attack, thus helping to defend the body against infection. [View Article](#)

Multiple Travel Vaccinations Seem Safe

28 April – Reuters reported giving travelers a battery of [vaccines](#) at one time, rather than spreading them out over several weeks, causes no serious side effects and appears to be acceptable to most patients, according to a new study. Although administering multiple vaccines in this way does appear to increase the risk of minor side effects, researchers from the University of Munich found most complaints related only to local soreness, tiredness or headaches. The findings are important because the boom in last-minute travel has made it difficult to ensure travelers complete vaccine schedules that can sometimes spread over several weeks. During the nine-month study, researchers immunized 1000 volunteers with between one and six vaccines. Analysis showed that local and systemic side effects increased with the number of vaccinations given, with 43 percent of the patients who were given a single vaccination reporting adverse reactions, compared to 58 percent of those who got two vaccines, nearly 61 percent of those given three, and about 70 percent of those who got more than three. The most frequent reaction was pain at the site of the injection but almost 25 percent of the multi-jab group also complained of tiredness or exhaustion, compared to 14 percent of the single-shot recipients. [View Article](#)

New Test May Help Hepatitis B Patients

29 April – Health Scout News reported researchers think they've discovered a way to tell if patients infected with a type of hepatitis will eventually fail to respond to a powerful drug. If the researchers are right, their test could help doctors do a better job of adjusting medications for people with hepatitis B, a deadly type of liver disease. [Hepatitis B](#), like [AIDS](#), responds to antiviral drugs. One of them, called lamivudine, is commonly used to keep hepatitis B under control. Korba and his colleagues studied 26 patients who had undergone treatment with lamivudine to see if there were any early warning signs of trouble. The researchers found DNA

"markers" in the genetic makeup of the virus in the patients who either developed immunity to lamivudine or never responded to it at all. They couldn't find the markers in the virus in patients who responded well to the drug. [View Article](#)

Overweight, Obesity, and Death from Cancer

24 April – The New England Journal of Medicine published a study that showed [excess weight](#) increases the risk of death from all causes and from [cardiovascular disease](#). Some evidence suggests that adiposity also increases the risk of death from [cancer](#). This prospective study of more than 900,000 men and women confirms that obesity is a significant risk factor for death from cancer generally and from cancer in several specific sites. This study adds to the evidence that obesity contributes to the risk of dying not only from heart disease and diabetes but also from cancer. The authors estimate that 90,000 deaths from cancer could be prevented every year in the United States if all adults could maintain a body-mass index (BMI) of less than 25. [View Article](#)

Price of AIDS Drugs Cut By Half

28 April – BBC News reported GlaxoSmithKline, the biggest manufacturer of [AIDS drugs](#) in the world, has halved the price of its leading AIDS drug in poor countries. The move comes after intense pressure on the pharmaceutical industry from health activists, investors and charities around the world. British-based GSK, which has previously said it did not sell AIDS drugs at a profit in the developing world, said it is now able to reduce prices thanks to more efficient manufacturing and economies of scale. Despite the steep price cuts for poor countries in recent years, the cost of combination drug therapy is still too high for the majority of people outside the developed world. The price offer is open to 63 developing countries, including all of sub-Saharan African. [View Article](#)

SARS Update

29 April – The WHO has lifted its travel restriction for Toronto. This is because the magnitude of probable [SARS](#) cases has decreased, 20 days have passed since the last cases of community transmission occurred and no new confirmed exportation of cases has occurred. [View Report](#)
29 April – Reuters reported SARS seems to be less severe in children than adults. [View Article](#)
29 April – CNN reported Asian leaders have adopted a six-point plan to try to control the outbreak of SARS. Included in the pan-Asian measures are: The pre-departure and arrival screening of international travelers, the establishment of an international emergency SARS hotline, the exchange of information, cooperation on research and training, meetings to devise other countermeasures to combat SARS and openness and transparency in dealing with the virus. [View Article](#)

Scientists Discover New Vitamin

24 April – MSNBC News reported Japanese scientists have discovered a new vitamin that plays an important role in fertility in mice and may have a similar function in humans, the research leader said on Thursday. PQQ is the first new vitamin to be discovered since 1948, the institute said. A research team led by Takafumi Kato confirmed that pyrroloquinoline quinone, a substance discovered in 1979, can be categorized as a vitamin. Mice deprived of PQQ suffer reduced fertility and roughened fur. Vitamins that have an important effect on mice usually act in the same way in humans, Kato said. More research is needed to find out exactly what is happening to these mice and what would be the effect on humans. The best source of PQQ discovered so far is "natto," a pungent Japanese dish of fermented soybeans. Other foods rich

in the substance include parsley, green tea, green peppers, kiwi fruit and papaya. PQQ is believed to belong to the vitamin B group, the release said. [View Article](#)

Staph Infection Process Leading to B Cell Suicide Described

28 April – Eurekalert reported the method that [Staphylococcus aureus](#) (staph) infection uses to inactivate the body's immune response and cause previously healthy B cells to commit suicide, is described for the first time by researchers at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) School of Medicine in the May 5, 2003 issue of the Journal of Experimental Medicine. "This mechanism may explain why staph infections are so common and why many people get them recurrently," said Gregg Silverman, M.D., UCSD professor of medicine and senior author of the paper. [View Article](#)

Study Suggests DDT-Breast Cancer Link

25 April – Reuters reported women with [breast cancer](#) may be more likely to have pesticide residues in their blood, a new study from Belgium suggests. In the study, women with breast cancer were more likely to have residues of the chemicals [DDT](#) and [HCB](#) in their blood than women who did not have cancer. "These results add to the growing evidence that certain persistent pollutants may occur in higher concentrations in blood samples from breast cancer patients than controls," writes a team led by Dr. Charles Charlier of Sart Tilman Hospital in Liege, Belgium. Nonetheless, the findings do not prove that exposure to the chemicals causes breast cancer. Charlier's team calls for more research on the topic, noting that the development of cancer "is a multifactorial event, and it is important to try to clarify the role of chemicals in cancer development." [View Article](#)

Worm Risk from Dog Stroking

23 April – BBC News reported a disease carried by dogs that can harm eyesight in humans can be picked up by simply stroking the animal, say researchers. [Toxocara canis](#) is a worm that grows in the guts of dogs, and can be found in their feces. If the worm gets into the human body, it can threaten eyesight, and cause toxocariasis, an illness similar to symptoms of glandular fever. Young children are considered particularly at risk from dog feces deposited in public parks and playing areas. It had been previously assumed that people were only at risk if they came into direct contact with feces, prompting campaigns to encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets when they take them for walks. However, research by a vet from Somerset, reports New Scientist magazine, suggests that even stroking and petting dogs could transfer the worms from dog to owner. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

England: Gastroenteritis Outbreak at Holiday Camp in Somerset

24 April – ProMed reported hundreds of guests at a Somerset holiday center have fallen ill with a serious gastroenteritis infection -- the third year in succession the infection has struck. More than 100 holidaymakers at the Butlin's Holiday Center in Minehead remain ill with what is thought to be a [norovirus infection](#). Specialist cleaning measures have been carried out throughout the resort. Altogether, more than 300 people have reported suffering symptoms since the outbreak began on Mon 14 Apr 2003. A spokesman for Somerset Health Authority,

which has not closed the holiday camp, said it was monitoring the situation daily. Tests are still under way to determine whether the infectious agent is a norovirus. Norovirus infection is highly contagious and causes vomiting and stomach upsets, but is not life threatening. [View Report](#)

TB Diagnosis Delayed in Whites, Women: UK Study

25 April – Reuters reported delay between the onset of [tuberculosis](#) and its diagnosis or treatment is significantly longer in white people compared with black or Asian people, and in women compared with men, British researchers reported. In the new study, Rodger, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and her colleagues analyzed data on TB cases collected by doctors between 1999 and 2000, and from a national survey conducted in 1998. They found that among 853 TB patients living in London, the delay between symptoms and diagnosis ranged from 14 to 103 days. The delay was longer than 49 days for half of the patients -- a finding consistent with those from other large cities in industrialized countries, the researchers note in the April 26th issue of the British Medical Journal. [View Article](#)

UK: Depleted Uranium Tests for Troops

25 April – BBC News reported UK troops returning from Iraq are to be offered tests to check for traces of depleted uranium ([DU](#)) in their bodies. The Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced the screening program after concerns were raised about the effects of exposure to DU, including a possible greater risk of cancer or kidney damage. Britain's leading scientific body - the Royal Society - claimed soldiers and civilians may have been exposed to dangerous levels. The MoD said it had decided last year to offer urine tests to personnel returning from deployments where DU ordnance was used. [View Article](#)

WHO: Ending Malaria a Priority

25 April – MSNBC News reported the world must do more to fight [malaria](#) in Africa, where a child dies of the disease every 30 seconds, the World Health Organization said. In a report published to coincide with Africa Malaria Day, the WHO and the U.N. children's fund UNICEF said the death toll from the disease, considered as entirely controllable, was "outrageously high." Unlike AIDS, which requires a disciplined regiment of drugs, malaria treatment is relatively cheap and accessible. "Malaria continues to tighten its grip on Africa. By scaling up our efforts we can reverse this trend," WHO chief Gro Harlem Brundtland said. [View Article](#)

WHO to Develop Vaccine for European Bird Flu

28 April – ABC Net News reported Western European countries are on red alert as an epidemic of highly contagious [bird flu](#) - which has reportedly killed one person after crossing the species barrier - continues to take its toll on Dutch and Belgian poultry farms. The Netherlands and Belgium are slaughtering chickens to prevent the spread of the avian influenza and the Netherlands has ordered an investigation to assess the impact on people of the viral disease. Experts say that the current outbreak, caused by the virus H7N7, is not dangerous to people but it could mutate, triggering a potentially dangerous influenza epidemic. The World Health Organisation is preparing a test kit and developing a vaccine for the disease. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Baghdad Hospitals Reopen But Health Care System Strained

24 April – The Red Cross reported power outages, hospital looting, damaged water systems, malnutrition - combined, these ingredients form the recipe for a dangerous health care crisis already developing in Baghdad. With no governing body in place to respond to the conditions, humanitarian agencies are filling the void before disease and death spread among the country's vulnerable populations. Shortly after coalition forces moved into Baghdad on April 8, widespread power outages left the city in the dark, severely affecting hospital services. The situation further deteriorated as bands of looters ravaged medical supplies and forced several major health care facilities to close their doors. In the weeks since, electricity has been partially restored to the city and the ground situation has somewhat stabilized. However, while hospitals have reopened, they are operating at a reduced capacity because of missing or damaged equipment and the continued absence of many doctors and nurses, who have not been paid since the beginning of the conflict. [View Article](#)

Health Surveillance System for Afghan Refugees

23 April – IRIN News reported an updated health surveillance system for Afghan refugees in Pakistan is being developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for the US-based Center for Disease Control (CDC) in order to better respond to their medical needs. IRC is collecting health-related information from Afghan refugee camps located in the North West Frontier, Punjab and Balochistan provinces, where the main concentrations of camps are, and generating country-level reports for the Office of the UN High commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to help detect and prevent epidemics through active surveillance. Data related to mortality, morbidity, reproductive health, child spacing, specific diseases, primary health care and referral is being collected from the refugee camps and used to evaluate effectiveness and coverage of health programs in the field. [View Article](#)

One-third of Iraq's Grain Crop Safe, U.N. Says

28 April – The Nando Times reported about one-third of Iraq's spring grain crop appears to have been spared damage from the war, a U.N. food agency said. The rest of the badly needed crop remains in doubt. The spring crop is safe in three northern governorates - Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah - where most farmers were not displaced during the conflict, said the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization. Those regions are expected to produce between 30 and 35 percent of this year's estimated crop of 1.7 tons of grain, the agency said. The harvest would help alleviate food shortages by producing more than 500,000 tons of wheat and barley. However, the situation remained unclear in the country's southern and central regions, in particular in the area around Baghdad between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which accounts for one-third of the cereal crop alone. In those areas, the crop depends entirely on irrigation systems, which have been damaged by weeks of conflict. Crops in the north are rain-fed. [View Article](#)

Threat of Famine Looms in Ethiopia Amid Worsening Drought

27 April - VOA reported the U.N. World Food Program says the problems of drought and hunger in Ethiopia have significantly worsened. A recent WFP survey in Ethiopia finds the number of people at risk from famine has increased from 11 million to 12.6 million since the start of this year. The World Food Program said it urgently needs one million tons of food to respond to this

situation. WFP spokeswoman Christiane Berthiaume said the agency is appealing for an additional \$200 million to feed those most at risk of starvation. Ms. Berthiaume blames the lack of rain in December and January for the rise in the number of hunger victims. She said the continued drought has resulted in a significant drop in agricultural production. This means many do not have the money to buy food in the markets. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Dead Crow Suggests Over-Wintering of West Nile Virus in Canada

28 April – ProMed reported the discovery of the first [West Nile](#)-infected crow in Canada this year all but proves the virus survives the Canadian winter. This raises the stakes in efforts to contain West Nile virus, as it means future Canadian outbreaks will arise locally from an ever-present source. The crow's death comes almost a month earlier than the first avian case of last year. A positive result so early after the spring thaw does not suggest this year's cases among humans will occur earlier; it still depends on prolonged warm weather. But it is good evidence that the virus is "seeded" in hibernating mosquito populations all across Ontario. Dr. Michael Drebot, Health Canada's head of viral zoonosis, said one way the West Nile virus can survive the winter is in *Culex pipiens* mosquitoes, which hibernate as adults on the walls of dank places like sewers and drainage ditches. This species prefers to feed on birds, but humans are put at risk when other mosquito species prey on infected birds and then on humans. [View Report](#)

Government To Probe Prozac's Effect on Reproductive Health

25 April – Health Scout News reported the federal government has announced it intends to investigate whether fluoxetine hydrochloride, better known as [Prozac](#), poses any threat to [human reproduction](#). The announcement appeared in the April 18 Federal Register. The government's National Toxicology Program's Center for the Evaluation of Risks to Human Reproduction (CERHR) will conduct the investigation. Although the company that makes the drug, Eli Lilly and Co. of Indianapolis, has never conducted a clinical trial in pregnant women, it points to several other studies that did not find any increase in malformation, neurodevelopment problems, postnatal complications or impaired central nervous system development in infants of mothers taking the drug. [View Article](#)

Hospital Water Systems May Harbor Harmful Molds

23 April – Reuters reported hospital water distribution systems may serve as an important reservoir of several varieties of disease-causing [molds](#), researchers report. Hospital-acquired mold infections can be an important cause of illness and death in patients with weakened immune systems, according to Dr. Elias J. Anaissie, from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, and colleagues. To investigate, Anaissie's group assessed mold levels in various environmental samples from a bone marrow transplantation unit outfitted with the best air precautions. Molds were isolated from 70 percent of the 398 water samples that were obtained, the authors report in the April 1st issue of the journal Blood. Furthermore, 22 percent of 1,311 surface swabs and 83 percent of 264 indoor air samples harbored molds. "Our findings suggest that, in hospitals with adequate air precautions, airborne molds originate from hospital water and not contaminated outside air," the investigators state. [View Article](#)

Look Both Ways Before Crossing

22 April – CBS News reported the very old and those who have been drinking alcohol are the most likely to be struck and killed by a vehicle, according to the government's most comprehensive report on pedestrian deaths. There were 4,882 pedestrian deaths in 2001, about 12 percent of the 42,116 traffic deaths, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported in a study being released Tuesday. That was a decrease of 16 percent from a decade earlier. People 70 and older accounted for nearly 20 percent of all pedestrian deaths in 2001, giving a per capita death rate nearly double the overall average. Almost one-third of pedestrian victims and about 15 percent of drivers had a blood-alcohol content of at least 0.08 percent, the level at which many states consider a person intoxicated, according to the report. [View Article](#)

Preventable Injuries Serious Health Threat

29 April – Reuters reported deaths and injuries due to accidents and violent crime have reached epidemic levels in the United States and pose a threat to the nation's economic and social well-being, federal health officials said. Injury is the top killer of Americans in the first four decades of life and costs the nation at least \$260 billion in health care, lost productivity and other expenses each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A national strategy is required to make Americans less complacent about the risk of injury. Officials said most of the nation's injuries could be prevented if legislators, health-care providers, religious leaders, teachers and parents joined a campaign to educate people at risk. A CDC study released on Monday suggested that the scale of the problem was enormous. The health-related costs of [rape, physical assault, stalking, and homicide](#) towards women by their husbands or partners is more than \$5.8 billion per year, according to the CDC study, which was based on data from a 1995 survey. [View Article](#)

SARS Report of Cases in the United States as of 28 April, 2003

State	Total Cases	Suspect Cases	Probable Cases	State	Total Cases	Suspect Cases	Probable Cases	State	Total Cases	Suspect Cases	Probable Cases
AL	1	1	0	ME	2	2	0	OH	12	11	1
AZ	1	1	0	MD	3	3	0	OR	1	1	0
AR	1	1	0	MA	16	15	1	PA	10	9	1
CA	55	35	20	MI	3	3	0	RI	1	1	0
CO	11	8	3	MN	8	7	1	SC	2	2	0
CT	6	4	2	MS	2	1	1	SD	1	1	0
FL	16	13	3	MO	2	2	0	TX	7	7	0
GA	3	3	0	NV	2	2	0	UT	5	4	1
HI	5	3	2	NH	1	1	0	VT	2	2	0
IL	13	13	0	NJ	4	3	1	VA	8	5	3
IN	1	1	0	NM	1	0	1	WA	22	20	2
KS	2	1	1	NY	32	26	6	WI	2	2	0
KY	3	2	1	NC	7	6	1	Total	274	222	52

*[Case definition](#)

For more information, visit this CDC [SARS web site](#).

Storm-related Deaths Occur More in Men, Involve Sports or Vehicles

24 April – Eurekalert reported men are more than twice as likely to die during thunderstorms than are women, and most cases involve a vehicle or sports. These findings from a University of Pittsburgh study were presented Monday, April 28, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Safety in Numbers meeting in Atlanta. In deaths from flash floods and high winds,

most of the victims were in a vehicle, usually engaged in an attempt to drive through the water. With regard to lightning strikes, most of the victims were involved in sports or recreational activities, or in work-related activities at the time of death. Dr. Songer examined data on thunderstorm-related deaths in the United States from 1994 through 2000. Specific weather elements included thunderstorm winds, flash floods, tornadoes and lightning. [View Article](#)

Suspected Human Anthrax aboard Ship

27 April – ProMed reported a cargo ship bound for a Quebec port will be intercepted by Canadian authorities, after it was learned that an officer on board died of the bacterial disease [anthrax](#) this week. The Wadi Al Arab, an Egyptian vessel carrying about 50,000 tons of bauxite to an Alcan aluminum plant in Saguenay, will be diverted to Halifax and inspected by Health Canada, Transport Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for possible anthrax contamination. An Alcan spokesperson alerted health officials after being told by the crew the first mate had died from anthrax and had been left behind in Brazil. It will not be allowed into any other port until shown to be disease-free. It is not yet known what type organ system the anthrax infected or how the diagnosis was made. [View Report 1](#) [View Report 2](#)

U.S.: Virus May Slow Spread of West Nile

23 April – ABC News reported a disease that kills mosquitoes could be one way to slow the spread of [West Nile virus](#), the Agriculture Department says. Jim Becnel, a scientist with the department's Agricultural Research Service, said he and a team of researchers have come up with a new method to kill mosquitoes by infecting them with an illness called baculovirus. It works only on mosquitoes. The department wants companies to make mosquito-killing sprays from baculovirus and put them on the market. They believe it could kill mosquitoes potentially carrying West Nile virus, an illness that killed 284 people and sickened 4,156 in the United States last year. Becnel said scientists discovered the mosquito-killing baculovirus in 1997 but it took years to understand how it is transmitted. They've found it infects a particular species of mosquito, Culex, a major carrier of West Nile virus. [View Article](#)

Utah: First Case of Hantavirus Infection in 2003

26 April – ProMed reported a 40-year-old man from Millard County has [contracted Hantavirus infection](#), the first case in the state this year, health officials said. The man lives in the central Utah town of Hinckley and became ill last week after sweeping his garage and spending several hours restoring an antique automobile. Blood tests confirmed the case late on Fri 18 Apr 2003. Hantavirus has been found in 11 of the state's 23 counties, but generally does not appear until the weather is warmer. [View Report](#)

USPACOM

New Caledonia: Dengue Fever Outbreak

28 April – ProMed reported an outbreak of [dengue fever](#) in the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia has now claimed 8 lives. The spread of the mosquito-borne disease accelerated after Cyclone Erica hit New Caledonia in mid-March 2003. RFO reports that the latest health statistics indicate that more than 1200 people in New Caledonia are suffering from dengue fever, which spread rapidly after Cyclone Erica dumped torrential rain on the main island and left behind tons of rotting vegetation. [View Report](#)

Polio Cases on the Rise

25 April – BBC News reported the number of cases of [polio](#) rose fourfold last year - a setback for health experts fighting to eradicate the disease. A large outbreak in India accounted for most of the increase. India is one of seven countries where the disease is still endemic. But there has been some success in the fight against polio with Ethiopia, Sudan and Angola, where the virus had been endemic, declared polio-free in 2002. Access to children in Somalia and Afghanistan for vaccination has also improved. The World Health Organization hopes to completely wipe out polio by 2005. [View Article](#)

Vietnam: Childhood Death Toll Rises to 38

27 April – ProMed reported a still unidentified sickness has killed 38 children and left more than 60 others ill in 17 Vietnamese provinces in the past 3 months. It is suspected that the disease is caused by an [enterovirus](#). It is believed to attack the intestines and the brain. Officials said it did not appear to be *Human enterovirus 71*, which killed 30 children in Malaysia in 1997 and more than 50 children in Taiwan in 1998 and is currently responsible for an extensive outbreak in Sarawak. Doctors and medical experts, along with the World Health Organization (WHO), completed an epidemiologic survey in Ho Chi Minh City. They did not classify the illness as an outbreak because the cases did not appear to be linked and were scattered throughout many provinces. All the children who succumbed to the disease experienced high fever and convulsion. Nearly 70 per cent of them died within a day of becoming sick. Mr. Nguyen Van Thuong, Vice-minister of Health, told health institutes to work closely to carry out a more thorough study of the disease and to work out a uniform diagnosis and treatment method for all hospitals. [View Report](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: Hantavirus Case Confirmed in Amazonas

26 April – ProMed reported the secretary of health of the state, Leny Passos, received representatives of the National Epidemiology Center of the National Health Foundation (Funasa). This group came to Manaus to begin an epidemiological investigation of the first case of cardiopulmonary syndrome caused by [Hantavirus infection](#) in Amazonas. It was reported by the Health Surveillance Department of the State Health Secretariat (Susam) after the Evandro Chagas Institute confirmed the diagnosis in April 2003. [View Report](#)

Dengue Fever Outbreaks in USSOUTHCOM Countries

28 April – ProMed reported on [dengue fever](#) outbreaks in a number of USSOUTHCOM countries. Dengue is spreading throughout many states in Brazil. In the northern states of Brazil, there have been 1,326 cases of classic Dengue Fever, and 1 case of Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever (DHF). In Bahia state, approximately 2000 cases of dengue have occurred in the last 2 months. There are 11,805 suspected cases in Ceara state with 1,018 confirmed. There have been 118 cases of DHF, with 52 confirmed and 4 deaths, with 9 other deaths pending confirmation. Public health authorities estimate that the 2,265 cases of dengue reported in Sao Paulo state in the city of Aracatuba since the beginning of 2003 represent only 60 percent of all cases in the city -- the balance of 40 percent (1,500 cases) did not come to the public health services and so were lost to official statistics. So the true count of dengue cases for the city is close to 3,700 cases. In a little more than one week, Palmas, the state capital of

Tocantins, has recorded 3 cases of DHF. In addition, in 2003, including partial numbers from this month (April), 1,525 cases of dengue have been notified statewide. Dengue is also in Bolivia. To date, 829 cases of dengue fever have been confirmed from the 4,000 samples received by the laboratory this year. In Guatemala, as of 22 Mar 2003, 454 cases of suspected dengue were registered, 35 of which were confirmed. They include one case DHF and one death. Finally, the detection of dengue fever and dengue hemorrhagic fever in the northern part of Honduras prompted the Minister of Health, to issue a 'yellow alert' in the region on Thu 24 Apr 2003. [View Report](#)

Guatemala: Landslide Information

28 April – Relief Web reported on 23 April, a landslide caused by heavy rains occurred in Cerro Cocol, San Pedro, in the department of San Marcos in the west of the country. The national coordination body in times of disaster, CONRED, informs that 22 houses were buried in Aldea Chím in the hamlet of San Francisco El Chichicaste, San Pedro Sacatepequez, in the department of San Marcos. As a result, at least 22 people are missing and search and rescue work is continuing, although there now remains little hope of finding survivors. [View Article](#)

Panama: New World Screwworm *Cochliomyia hominivorax* - Emergency Report

24 April – ProMed reported on the intensification of a screwworm outbreak in Panama. There have been 27 outbreaks in Colon, 9 in Comarca, 266 in Darien, and 131 in Panama. Hundreds of animals have been affected including cattle, pigs, horses, dogs and birds. The origin of the infection was the dispersal of fertile flies from the sterile fly production plant, located in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Control measures are in effect. [View Report](#)

Thousands Flee Argentine Floods

30 April – BBC News reported the authorities in Santa Fe province in northern Argentina have evacuated 15,000 people in the most severe flooding in 30 years. Local civil defense officials said in some areas the rivers rose by as much as 20 inches in 12 hours. But the evacuated residents have complained that politicians are ignoring them in their hour of need. Nobody, not even the weather forecasters, predicted Santa Fe's flooding. Rivers across the low-lying province rose dramatically after heavy storms hit on Monday. The water in some rivers surged and the provincial capital, the city of Santa Fe, is now an island. [View Article](#)

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiupdate/>.

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